example component speed, operating protocol, etc. Accordingly, other embodiments are within the scope of the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system, comprising:

a backplane having a plurality of conductors;

a first plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the first printed circuit boards having a plurality of electrical contacts, each one of the electrical contacts providing an indication of an incapability of an electrical component on such one of the printed circuit boards, each one of such electrical contacts being electrically connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors of the backplane;

circuitry connected to the plurality of conductors for converting the operating incapability indications provided by the plurality of printed circuit boards into logic signals on the plurality of conductors;

a second plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the second plurality of printed circuit boards having a decoder responsive to the logic signals on the plurality of conductors for selecting an operating characteristic for electrical components on the second plurality of printed circuit boards, such selected operating characteristic being compatible with operating characteristics of the electrical components on the first plurality of printed circuit boards.

2. The system recited in claim 1 wherein the operating characteristic is operating speed and wherein the decoders select the highest speed compatible with the speed capability of the electrical components on the plurality of first printed circuit boards.

3. A system, comprising:

a backplane having a plurality of conductors;

a first plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the first printed circuit boards having a plurality of electrical contacts, each one of the electrical contacts providing an indication signal representative of an predetermined operating incapability of an electrical component on such one of the printed circuit boards, each one of such electrical contacts being electrically connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors of the backplane;

a second plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the second plurality of printed circuit boards having a decoder responsive to the incapability indication signal on the plurality of conductors for selecting an operating characteristic for electrical components on the second plurality of printed circuit boards, such selected operating characteristic being compatible with operating characteristics of the electrical components on the first plurality of printed circuit boards.

4. The system recited in claim 3 wherein the operating characteristic is operating speed and wherein the decoders select the highest speed compatible with the speed capability of the electrical components on the plurality of first printed circuit boards.

5. A system, comprising:

a backplane having a plurality of conductors;

a first plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the first printed circuit boards having a plurality of electrical contacts, each one of the electrical contacts providing an indication of an predetermined speed incapability of an electrical component on such one of the printed circuit boards, each one of such electrical contacts being electrically connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors of the backplane;

circuitry connected to the plurality of conductors for converting the operating speed incapability indications provided by the plurality of printed circuit boards into logic signals for the plurality of printed circuit boards;

a second plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the second plurality of printed circuit boards having:

an electrical component; and

a source of a plurality of clock signals, each one of the plurality of clock signals having a different rate;

a decoder for coupling one of the plurality of clock signals to the electrical component on such one of the second plurality of printed circuit boards selectively in accordance with the provided logic signals; and

wherein the decoders of the second plurality of printed circuit boards couple to the electrical components thereon the one of the plurality of clock signals having a

rate compatible with operating speeds of the electrical components on the first plurality of printed circuit boards.

6. The system recited in claim 5 wherein the circuitry provides a wired-NOR configuration.

7. The system recited in claim 5 wherein each one of the plurality of contacts is connected to ground potential when such contact provides an indication of operating speed incapability; otherwise such contact is open circuited.

8. The system recited in claim 7 wherein the circuitry provides a wired-NOR configuration.

9. The system recited in claim 5 wherein the decoders select as the rate a rate compatible with operating speeds of the electrical components on the first plurality of printed circuit boards the one of the plurality of clock signals having the highest rate compatible with the speed capability of the electrical components on the plurality of first printed circuit boards.

10. A system, comprising:

a backplane having a plurality of conductors;

a plurality of resistors, each one connected between a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors and a voltage source;

a first plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the first printed circuit boards having a plurality of electrical contacts, each one of the electrical contacts being connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors, each one of such contacts being connected to either ground or to an open circuit, connection to ground providing an indication of an operating speed incapability of an electrical component on such one of the first printed circuit boards;

wherein the contact connected to ground provides a first logic state on the one of the plurality of conductors connected thereto when such contact is connected to ground and provides a second logic state on the one of the plurality of conductors connected thereto when such contact is connected to an open circuit;

a second plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one thereof having:

an electrical component; and

a source of a plurality of clock signals, each one of the plurality of clock signals having a different rate;

a decoder for coupling one of the plurality of clock signals to the electrical component on such one of the second plurality of printed circuit boards selectively in accordance with the provided logic states; and

wherein the decoders of the second plurality of printed circuit boards couple to the electrical components thereon the one of the plurality of clock signals having a rate compatible with operating speeds of the electrical components on the first plurality of printed circuit boards.

11. The system recited in claim 10 wherein the decoders selects as the rate a rate compatible with operating speeds of the electrical components on the first plurality of printed circuit boards the one of the plurality of clock signals having the highest rate compatible with the speed capability of the electrical components on the plurality of first printed circuit boards.

12. A system comprising:

a backplane having a plurality of conductors;

a plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the first printed circuit boards having a plurality of electrical contacts, each one of the electrical contacts providing an indication of an predetermined operating incapability of an electrical component on such one of the printed circuit boards, each one of such electrical contacts being electrically connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors of the backplane;

circuitry connected to the plurality of conductors for converting the operating incapability indications provided by the plurality of printed circuit boards into logic signals for the plurality of printed circuit boards.

13. The system recited in claim 12 wherein the operating incapability is operating speed.

14. A backplane system comprising:

a plurality of printed circuit broads each one having an electrical component thereon; and

a backplane for producing a signal indicative of the highest rate compatible with the speed capability of the electrical components on the plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into such backplane.

15. A method for operating a system, comprising:

providing a backplane system comprising:

a plurality of printed circuit broads each one having an electrical component thereon; and

a backplane having plugged therein the plurality of printed circuit boards for producing a signal indicative of an operating incompatibility of the electrical components;

interrupting start-up of the system upon detection of such operating incompatibility.

16. The method recited in claim 15 wherein the operating incompatibility is operating speed.

17. The method recited in claim 15 wherein the operating incompatibility is operating protocol.

18. A method for operating a system, comprising:

providing a backplane system comprising:

a plurality of printed circuit broads each one having an electrical component thereon; and

a backplane having plugged therein the plurality of printed circuit boards for producing a signal indicative of a speed compatibility of the electrical components;

plugging an additional printed circuit broad having an electrical component thereon into the provided backplane, the electrical component on such additional printed circuit board being incompatible with the speed of the electrical components on the plurality of printed circuit boards;

inhibiting electrical coupling the electrical component on the additional printed circuit board from the electrical components of the plurality of printed circuit boards.

19. A method comprising:

providing a backplane having a plurality of conductors with a plurality of printed circuit boards plugged into the backplane, each one of the first printed circuit boards having a plurality of electrical contacts, each one of the electrical contacts providing an indication of an predetermined operating incapability of an electrical component on such one of the printed circuit boards, each one of such electrical contacts being electrically connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of conductors of the backplane; and

converting the operating incapability indications provided by the plurality of printed circuit boards into logic signals for the plurality of printed circuit boards.

20. The method recited in claim 19 wherein the operating incompatibility is operating speed.

21. The method recited in claim 19 wherein the operating incompatibility is operating protocol.